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AUTHOR Rhodes, Emma E.
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ABSTRACT

In an investigation of why Black youth in the greater Little Rock area appear to have low self-concepts, 197 Black adults were interviewed. Interviewees included professionals and nonprofessionals and the employed and unemployed. The average age was 33. Approximately 60 percent agreed that the majority of Black youth have a poor self-concept. Reasons given for this, starting with the one cited most often, were lack of motivation, the fact that negative self-concepts are ingrained by society and the traditional Black background, lack of positive role models, lack of education or marketable skills, and poor economic conditions. Of the 197 interviewed, 167 though that the greatest responsibility for developing positive self-concept in Black youth lies in the home and that other institutions can do little to change self-concept if it is not fostered at home. Roughly three-fifths felt they were having a positive impact on local youth, but almost all felt that they should be doing more and expressed willingness to become involved in any pertinent programs. Seventy percent felt that a person's past influences his/her self-concept. Finally, 80 percent felt that being Black does not in itself cause poor self-concept. (CMG)

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EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST PROJECT

DEVELOPING POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS

IN

BLACK YOUTH VIA POSITIVE BLACK ROLE MODELS

Dr. Ok D. Park, Chairman
Business Education
University of Arkansas

Dr. M. W. Schoppmeyer, Professor
School Services Personnel
Educational Administration
University of Arkansas

Dr. Dean Clayton
Area Coordinator - Vocational Education
Graduate Education
University of Arkansas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Submitted by:
Emma E. Rhodes, graduate applicant
Vocational Educational Specialist
April 12, 1984

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OUTLINE

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DEVELOPING POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS

IN

BLACK YOUTH VIA POSITIVE BLACK ROLE MODELS

Introduction

It appeared to this researcher that the majority of Black youth in the greater Little Rock area had a very low self-concept. There were no studies recalled in the state of Arkansas to disqualify this conclusion, therefore, the general conclusion, prior to this study, of the writer was that maybe this was due to a lack of Black positive role models.

In order to gain a broader view of this concept, the writer decided to interview other Blacks, young and old, male and female, professional and non-professional, and employed and unemployed. This was to gain more knowledge in the area of self-concepts in Black youth and document reasons given by others as to why a majority of Black youth in the greater Little Rock area appeared to have low self-concepts.

This study was also done to fulfill the requirements for the Educational Specialist degree from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Personal Background

This research project developed as a result of the writer's interest in and work with youth and adults in poverty programs. In the role of advisor, teacher, and counselor for over 14 years in the MDTA (Manpower Development Training Act), CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act), and presently the JTPA (Jobs Training Partnership Act) Federal Programs for the State Department of Education, direct contact was made with a great number of youth, both black and white, in the greater Little Rock area. As a result of this contact in the classroom and on high schools

and college campuses, it appeared that a majority of the Black youth had very low self-concepts. Because the writer has a deep concern for all youth, it is hoped that by sharing the results of this study, it will have a positive impact upon the lives of all readers, especially Black youth.

Rationale and Need for the Study

Of all minorities affected in today's society and over the past century, Black youths seems to be hardest hit and most adversely affected by the way the government is operated on the local, state, and national levels.

In consideration of the past and present status of the economy, the high unemployment ratio, especially for Black youth, and the future outlook in the job market, attention must be given to the impact that positive role models may have on Black youth in the area of developing positive self-concept.

Improvements in educational opportunities and integration into white schools to achieve a more equitable balance have served a good purpose. Nevertheless, these efforts apparently have not and are not meeting the needs, sufficiently, of Black youth in today's society.

Upon looking for related studies that had already been done in the area of "Developing Positive Self-concepts in Black Youth via Black Positive Role Models" the writer found none that addressed this subject.

As a result of this endeavor, the researcher proposed that more involvement on the part of Black leaders, those who are in established positions, students in schools, colleges, etc., young and old, as it relates to sharing experiences that contributed to their success, could do much to enhance the building of positive self-concepts in Black youth. Subsequently, the research

was developed with encouragement from the researcher's graduate advisory committee from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Prior to this study, visitations were made to the major prisons and rehabilitation centers in Arkansas and the researcher was advised that over 70 percent of their population consisted of Black youth from the greater Little Rock area and ranged in average age of 18 to 24 years. This was seen by the researcher as possibly having to do with the lack of visibility and involvement on the part of Black leaders in the life of Black youth in Arkansas.

As a means of verification and documentation, this research began by interviewing for feedback and soliciting the cooperation and support of Black personalities in the greater Little Rock and surrounding or outlying areas that have had and are having a profound effect upon Black youth.

Scope

The plans were to interview inmates and ex-offenders for a comparison of their views of what they thought were contributing factors of their circumstances. The research was also structured to include the views of youth who were incarcerated or wards of the state and contrast it by youth who were "in the free world" and had not had those experiences. This effort did not materialize due to the structure of the state laws, confidentiality of records, privileged information, parent releases, minors, etc. The closest the researcher was able to get to fulfilling this endeavor was by interviewing parole officers, correctional counselors, and juvenile judges. The research extended to visits with "successful" Black doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, business professionals, activists, counselors, social workers, teaching parents in youth homes, barbers, beauticians, pastors, missionaries, clerks, secretaries, unemployed youth and adults, non-professionals, high

school students and drop-outs, college graduates and drop-outs, and any other who would share their views in this research.

The original plan was to interview two personalities of each major professional and non-professional area. However, upon delving into the project, there were so many Blacks interested in sharing their views and displayed such an interest to cooperate and support such an endeavor that the research expanded to include documentation of 197 participants living in and around the greater Little Rock area.

Review of Literature

Thanks are extended to the Arkansas Department of Education for its assistance in the search for references. Project AID (Arkansas Information Dissemination) did an ERIC search for information that might be relevant to that of the researcher of this paper. There were no studies done or recalled in the state of Arkansas covering the research undertaken by the writer of this project that of "DEVELOPING POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS IN BLACK YOUTH VIA POSITIVE BLACK ROLE MODELS.

A review of the literature gathered is as follows:

An article written by Estelle W. Taylor, entitled Modes and "Role Models" in Education, November 1977, and released in the Crisis Journal; 1984; vol. 9; pages 427-29, concluded that "In many educational circles there is much talk especially among blacks, of the need for role models and the scarcity of positive constructive examples of those who stand for academic excellence for young people to emulate." The writer of this article seems to share the same concerns but there was no record of any follow-up on the topic.

The article by Carol Hodson Smith, entitled Black Female Achievers in Academe, released in the Journal of Negro Education, vol. 51, pages 318-41

in the Summer 1982 was based on responses to a questionnarie, described the goals, education, and work experience, and the influence on higher education of twelve Black women educators. There was no relation to the research done by the writer of this research project.

The article by James E. Blackwell, entitled Networking and Mentoring was a study of Cross-Generational Experiences of Blacks in Graduate and Professional Schools. There was no relations to present research.

The article by Charles D. Moody, Sr., entitled On Becoming a Superintendent: Contest or Sponsored Mobility, was released in the Journal of Negro Education; vol. 52, pages 383-97, Fall 1983. Mr. Moody studied the role of such professional contacts as consultants, mentors, and advisors (specifically Blacks) in the selection and place of Black school superintendents. He found that white consultants were disproportionately selected by school boards to advise on hiring decisions. He holds that sponsorships, mentorship, and networking control and limit minority access to positions such as the superintendency. This article is related in the sense that there is reason why Black youth may have poor self-concepts from looking at the way Blacks in higher position are discriminated against in hiring practices.

The last article by Wayne H. Oberle, Role Models of Negro and White Rural Youth at Two Stages of Adolescence. This was the revision of a paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association, Dallas, Texas, March, 1971. The objective of this paper was to investigate the utility of the Ginzberg developmental model for explaining differences in the types or occupational status of the role models of Negro and White rural youth at two stages of adolescence. It was concluded that Negro boys selected more teachers and glamour figures as role models than

did the White boys, that White boys chose more relatives, and that White boys had a more diverse selection pattern than did their Negro age cohorts. In patterns that did differ over time for Negro and White girls, it was found that the White girls had a slightly more diverse selection pattern than did the Negro girls in 1966, the opposite was true in 1968, and more White girls than Negro girls selected housewives as role models. There was very little relation to the study made by the researcher of this paper as to the impact of Black positive role models on Black youth in Arkansas.

Objectives

This researcher found that the majority of Black youth encountered in class situations would always present themselves in a negative way by pointing up their feelings of worthlessness. The majortiy of Black youth would also share their frustrations by referring to relatives, friends, and peers of low estate. It was the intent of this researcher to prove to Black youth and others that "a person can be what he/she wants to be depending upon the course chosen and strived for by that individual." The following are objectives of this researcher:

1. To develop or enhance the understanding of Black youth as to the importance of having a positive self-concept.
2. To point up the impact that both positive and negative role models can impose upon their lives.
3. To share the results of this study after preparing a questionnaire and making a comparative analysis of those interviewed with Black youths, adults, and other interested readers.
4. To solicit the cooperation and support of those interviewed who would be willing to serve as resource persons for Black youth.
5. To develop follow-up programs where both youth and adult would be actively involved in developing positive self-concepts in Black youth.

Activities

A. Preparation of a questionnaire. This activity involved the selection of questions to be asked that would address themselves to the issues that are pertinent in developing positive self-concepts in Black youth. The questions were prepared solely by the researcher of this project based upon experience and background in the role of teacher, counselor, and parent. (See a copy of questionnaire in the Appendix)

B. Solicitation of input from viable sources of personalities that would have and are having an impact upon the Black youth in the greater Little Rock area.

C. Selection of personalities from each profession and non-professional area to interview for documentation that Black youth identify with more readily.

D. Scheduling of visits. Visits were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewees.

E. Documentation of interviews and editing for writing. This activity consisted of filling in and/or assisting the interviewees in spelling and/or writing for them where necessary. There were also times when a condensing of the thoughts of the interviewees were necessary and the documenting of their responses.

F. Assimulating materials and finalizing for submission. This activity consisted of pulling together all materials, typing in roughdraft form, and the submission of the research study to the graduate advisory committee for approval at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Findings

The following is an analysis of the questionnaire used in this research study:

Question #1: The name, age, and sex of the participant.

Total number interviewed - 197 (Male - 65, Female - 132)

Response to question #2: How long have you lived in the greater Little Rock area? Answers are as follows:

1-10 years	11-20	21-30	31-40	41 and above	
40	28	47	56	26	Total - 197

Response to question #3: Are you presently employed?

Yes	No
127	70

Response to question #4: Are you considered a professional person?

Yes	No
95	102

Breakdown in ages are as follows:

	15-30	31-45	46 and above	
Professional - Ages	23	49	23	Total - 95
Non-professionals -	50	37	15	Total - 102

Response to question #5: If yes, what is your title?

Teachers - 11

Counselors - 9

Judges - 2

Doctors - 1

Lawyers - 1

Other professionals - 71 (These consisted of barbers, beauticians, businessmen and women, secretaries, clerks, store managers, etc.)

Total - 95

Response to question #6: Do you think that the majority of Black youth have a poor self-concept?

Yes	No	Not sure	
122	43	32	Total - 197

Reasons given for a majority of Black youth having a poor self-concept are as follows:

Lack of Motivation	37
Ingrained by Society or Traditional Background	32
Lack of Positive Role Models	21
Lack of Education or Marketable Skills	7
Due to Poor Economic Conditions	7

Answered - Yes - Poor self-concepts/No reason given	29
Answered - No - gave some reasons	25
Answered - Not sure - no reason given	19
Answered - No - no reason given	14
Answered - Not sure - but speculated	6
Total -	197

Response to question #7: Where do you feel the greatest responsibility lie for developing positive self-concepts in Black youth?

Home	Church	School	Business Community	Youth themselves
167	17	7	1	5

Total - 197

Response to question #8: Do you think you are having a positive impact upon the Black youth in your area or community?

Yes	No	Not sure
118	36	43

Total - 197

Response to questions #9, 10, and 11 varied, but 98 percent expressed a willingness and a desire to become actively involved in doing more to positively impact upon the youth in their area or community.

Response to question #12: Do you think a person's past influences his self-concept?

Yes	No	Not sure
140	23	34

Total - 197

Response to question #13: Do you think being a member of the Black race constitutes poor self-concept?

Yes	No	No sure
18	158	21 (with qualified reasons)

Total - 197

Summary

First, a "Thank you" is extended to all who participated in this research project of "Developing Positive Self-concepts in Black Youth Via Positive Black Role Models."

Much more insight was gained on the part of the researcher as to why a majority of the Black youth in the greater Little Rock area appeared to have low self-concepts.

Prior to this research, the writer felt it was mainly due to the lack of positive Black role models. However, some new insights have been gained as a result of interviewing and documenting the responses of 197 participants who lived in the greater Little Rock area. Of 197 interviewed, there were 65 male and 132 female; the average age being 33. The majority interviewed had lived in the greater Little Rock area 20 to 40 years. There were 127 who were presently employed and 70 unemployed who consisted mainly of the youth 18 to 24 years of age. Of those who were employed, the majority held non-professional positions and ranged in ages from 31 to 45 years. A majority of the professionals interviewed held teaching, counseling, barbering and beautician's positions.

In response to the most pertinent question in the research "Do you feel that the majority of Black youth have a poor self-concept?" - 122 of 197 interviewed answered "Yes". The number one reason given for poor self-concept was a "Lack of Motivation". The number two reason given was that of "Ingrained by Society or Traditional Background". Explanations were that a majority of Black youth have accepted the concepts passed down to them by others who were impacting upon their lives. It is sometimes referred to as the "self-fulling prophecy", that is, if one is told often enough and

with enough force, it becomes ingrained into the hearer and it is fulfilled as prophesied. The rationales given were not necessarily because prejudices are being passed down now by the "white man" as much as it was thought to be an acceptance of the old traditional thinkings of the Black masses. However, the way society is geared as far as employment is concerned, hiring practices, promotions on the job, the small number of Blacks in high positions, the school situations, etc., tends to make the Black youth of today very skeptical of their role in life. It appeared that maybe it is not what is "said verbably" by society but what is "being done" that discriminates against Blacks and other minority groups in their thinkings of self-worth and potential. The third reason listed as cause for poor self-concepts in Black youths was "Lack of Positive Role Models". The rationales given were not because there were no Black role models to emulate but due to the lack of visibility or involvement on their part with the Black youth in their area or community. The fourth and fifth reasons received the same number of counts. Responses were listed as "Lack of Education and/or Marketable Skills and 'Due to Economic Conditions."

It was thought by 167 of 197 interviewed that the greatest responsibility for developing positive self-concepts in Black youth lie in the home. The general consensus was that if youth were not encouraged and did not receive positiveness in the home, there would be little any other institution could do to change self-images.

Of the total interviewed, 118 said they felt they that they were having a positive impact upon the youth in their area or community. However, 98 percent expressed concerns for not doing as much as they felt that they could do and expressed a willingness to do more and become involved in any programs

developed that would enhance self-concepts in Black youths.

In response to the question "Do you think a person's past influences his self-concept?" - 140 answered a definite "Yes". The general consensus was that a person can benefit from past experiences and this might serve more to one's advantage that to his disadvantages. The final question in the research study was "Do you think being a member of the Black race constitutes poor self-concepts?" The response again was very profound, in that, 158 of 197 replied "No". Those that answered "Yes" and "Not sure" qualified their answers to that of the discrimination practices by the "white society" against Blacks and other minorities. The general conclusions were that these actions may be viewed by the Black youths as a "curse" for the color of their skin or for being a member of the Black race.

This researcher concluded that the challenge is definitely left to the Blacks who are in positions of leadership, the parents, teachers, church organizations, etc., to serve as that positive stimuli which is needed to motivate the Black youth. Even though the task will not be an easy one, ideas that have been ingrained over the years by society can be changed if concerted efforts are put forth by those who are impacting the most in the lives of Black youth. And, finally, this researcher feels it will be what positive Blacks "do" rather than what they "say" that will have the greatest impact in developing positive self-concepts in the Black youth.

QUESTIONNAIRE

DEVELOPING POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPTS IN BLACK YOUTH VIA POSITIVE BLACK ROLE MODELS

The purpose of this questionnarie is to gain input from Black professional and non-professionals (youth and adult, male and female) of their views as to why a majority of Black youth seem to have a very poor self-concept and solicit their cooperation and support in developing positive self-esteem in Black youth.

Please answer the questions as precisely and concisely as possible. Thank you for your cooperation and support in this endeavor.

1. Name_____Age___Sex_____Male____Female (Check one)

2. How long have you lived in the greater Little Rock area_____

3. Are you presently employed?_____

4. Are you considered a professional person?_____

5. If yes, what is your title? _____

6. Do you think that the majority of Black youth have a poor self-concept? Yes__No__Not sure__(Please feel free to explain)_____
_____
_____

7. Where do you feel the greatest responsibility lie for developing positive self-esteem in Black youth? Church___School__Home__Business community__The youth themselves__News Media__Other___ Comments:_____
_____
_____

8. Do you think you are having a positive impact upon the Black youth in your area or community? Yes___No__Not sure___

9. If yes, what are you doing?_____
_____
_____

10. What do you think you could do?_____
_____
_____

11. Do you think that a person's past influences his self-concept? Yes__No___ Not sure___Comments:_____
_____

12. What would you be willing to do to help build positive self-concepts in Black youth?_____
_____

13. Do you think being a member of the Black race constitutes poor self-concepts? Yes__No__Not sure__Comments:_____
_____
_____

Thank you.

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